
ESSAYS 論説

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The Ideal Ruler and the Domain-bounded State

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Introduction

An enlightened or ideal ruler (*meikun*) is one who excels in sagacity and has an excellent reputation as a ruler. In early modern Japan, most of the rulers considered to be enlightened were less the emperor who was placed at the apex of authority or the shogun who held national power and authority but rather the daimyo who controlled local areas. In terms of having been called an enlightened ruler, there was no difference between the eighth shogun Tokugawa Yoshimune who governed the entire country and the daimyo who ruled regional domains, men like Hoshina Masayuki, Tokugawa Mitsukuni, Maeda Tsunanori and Ikeda Mitsumasa in the early part of the period, and Hosokawa Shigekata, Tokugawa Harusada, Satake Yoshikazu, Matsudaira Sadanobu and Uesugi Harunori in the middle of the period. Even though they were not known nationwide for being enlightened rulers like those listed above, there were still quite a few daimyo who were called enlightened rulers or wise rulers within the history of the narrow confines of their own domains.

There are many different perspectives from which to talk about these enlightened rulers among the daimyo, but in this report I plan to take up Ikeda Mitsumasa, lord of Okayama domain, who was one of the early ones, clarify the way in which an enlightened ruler was constructed and the elements that went into constituting its image, and then putting these together extract the consciousness of the state that the image of the enlightened ruler represented.

There are various interpretations regarding whether the early modern state (the state represented in the bakuhan system) should be seen as a state with centralized authority or as a state with partible authority, but in all of them, since the debate over the relative importance of the ruling authority held by the bakufu (the shogun) and the domain (the daimyo), which in both cases had the same characteristics, becomes a debate over measuring the strength or weakness of the bakufu and domains using the same yardstick for both, the downside is that it ends up trapped in a blind alley. I argue that my investigation into the image of the enlightened ruler is one method for overcoming this kind debate on the nature of the state in the bakuhan system.

The Accounts Constructed for one of the Enlightened Rulers among the Early Daimyo

Ikeda Mitsumasa was born in 1609 and died at the age of 74 in 1682. In 1616 at the age of eight he succeeded to the Himeji domain in Harima worth four hundred twenty thousand koku bequeathed to him at the death of his father, Toshitaka, but mistrusted because of his youth, in 1617 his holding was reduced to three hundred twenty thousand koku and he was moved to the Tottori domain in Inaba and Hōki. In 1632 at the age of 24 he was ordered by the bakufu to swap domains with his cousin Ikeda Mitsunaka, his cousin within the same Ikeda family who had succeeded to the lordship of his domain at the age of three and so he was invested in the Okayama domain with a holding of three hundred fifteen thousand koku in Bizen. Thereafter until 1672, for the forty one years until he became 64, he held onto his position as lord of Okayama domain where for many years he kept his own diary and employed a Confucian political philosophy that centered on issues of benevolent government, so that by diligently spending his days in hard work, he managed to construct a domain system and execute political policies with an unbending posture that ingratiated him neither with the bakufu nor the other domains. Even after his eldest son Ikeda Tsunamasa became the domain lord, for the ten years until his death, Mitsumasa continued to express himself on domain policies.¹

Seeing Mitsumasa as an enlightened ruler began while he was still alive among his immediate circle. The first example of this can be found in his close associate Tsuda Nagatada who kept a record of Mitsumasa's speech and deeds while he was serving as lord of the domain that envisioned him as an enlightened ruler.² Four years after Mitsumasa's death in 1686, a "shrine to a fine lord" (*Hōretsu-shi*) that enshrined Mitsumasa was built in the Shizutani school founded in the last years of Mitsumasa's reign, and as we can see from the fact that the name of this school was changed to Shizutani shrine in 1875, this enshrinement was the equivalent to deifying him upon his death. That the appellation "Hōretsu" along with "rekko" and "hōretsu-kō" came to be used as a special term designating Mitsumasa in later records of enlightened rulers means that this was also the period in which his public designation as an enlightened ruler came to be constructed. In 1689 Ikeda Masatomo compiled "Dialogue by a mighty ruler" (*Rekkō mongo*), and in 1704 the magistrate in charge of the Shizutani school wrote what should be seen as a chronology of Mitsumasa's life called "An account of the fine lord's mortuary temple" (*Hōretsu shidō-ki*). In that same year, a gilt bronze statue of Mitsumasa was installed in the Hōretsu shi.

In the domain rules and regulations issued in 1723, the term "the age of Shintarō" appeared and we know that it was also used to enhance the authority of the regulations issued to the retainers. Then around 1748 or 1749 a domain retainer wrote the text called "Elegant record" (*Yūhiroku*) that provided the basic materials for anecdotes about Mitsumasa as an enlightened ruler in later years. In the latter half of the eighteenth century "Chapters of a leader" (*sosshō roku*) was written by a domain retainer and "Reminiscences of a mighty ruler in Kibi" (*Kibi rekko*)

¹Taniguchi Sumio's *Okayama hanseishi no kenkyū* (Hanawa Shobō, 1964) contains a detailed narrative from which this summary was drawn. See also Chart 1.

²Tsuda Nagatada, "Nagatada jihitsu oboegaki" in *Ikeda Mitsumasa kōden* (Tōkyō Insatsu Kabushiki Kaisha, 1932) pp. 1455-1475.

iji) was written by a Confucian scholar. In the first half of the nineteenth century another Confucian scholar wrote "A record of utmost respect and admiration" (*Gyōshi roku*). In addition there are numerous other monographic accounts about this enlightened ruler. Even historical and geographical descriptions of Bizen like "The secret record of knowledge about Kibi" (*Kibi onko hitsuroku*) or genealogies like "An abbreviated version of the history of the Ikeda family" (*Ikeda-ke rireki ryakki*) gave considerable weight to the facts they included about Mitsumasa.³ Mitsumasa's fame as an enlightened ruler was not confined just to his own domain or to Kamogata domain, a branch of Okayama where in the latter half of the eighteenth century the domain lord Ikeda Masaka had his own retainers use for their edification Mitsumasa's dying instructions compiled in a book titled "Ruler's regulations" (*kunsoku*). Rather his name was so widely known even outside his domain that it appeared in all sorts of accounts.

The Image of the Enlightened Ruler vis-a-vis the Shogun, the Retainers, and the Peasants

Even taking into account that for the long period of over half a century Mitsumasa maintained the position of domain lord in the family-related domains of Tottori and Okayama, his life was amply endowed with the conditions for him to be advertised as an enlightened ruler with proof of his powers of self-regulation in the maintenance of his health and proof of his political power in his containment of political strife. This report is not about Mitsumasa's achievements in and of themselves, however, and there is a separation between his achievements and the anecdotes told about him as an enlightened ruler, but nevertheless, they were combined into an image of the famous ruler that in its entirety comprised both. Here I want to emphasize the dimension that gave direction to a mode of being that came to be desired by later daimyo, retainers, and peasants. The accounts of enlightened rulers give the appearance of having collected trifling incidents remembered quite by accident, but if they are viewed synthetically, it is clear that they were constructed out of phenomena that showed three relationships: Mitsumasa's relationship with the bakufu, his retainers, and the people of his domain.

The statement for which Mitsumasa is best known as an enlightened ruler goes as follows: "The highest lord has been entrusted with all the people in the country of Japan by heaven. The provincial ruler is entrusted with the people of his province by the highest lord (shogun). The house elders and the samurai help their lord and work to make the people secure."⁴ This statement represents the nucleus of accounts about Mitsumasa as an enlightened ruler. Its literal meaning is that the shogun holds all the people of Japan in trust from heaven, the daimyo hold the people of a single domain or province which is one part of Japan in trust from the shogun and the daimyo's retainers assist their ruler in looking after the welfare of the people of the domain. In a related section, we can find a noteworthy passage that begins with "loyalty in a time of war" and ends with "loyalty in a time of peace."⁵ Here Mitsumasa extricated himself from a way of thinking that had in mind the capability of a warrior during a time of

³For the accounts about this enlightened ruler please see Chart 2.

⁴"Gyōshi roku" section 3 in *Kibi gunsho shūsei* vol. 4 (Kibi Gunsho Shūsei Kankōkai, 1931) p. 209.

⁵*Ibid.*

nationwide strife not to begrudge dying in battle before his lord's horse, to seek instead the warriors' transformation into domain retainers who would render service to their lord through their skill in administration and governing the people.

In accounts of enlightened rulers, these words have taken on an independent existence as Mitsumasa's immortal sayings, but it must be realized that in reality these constitute but one admonition in a long document directed at all the retainers issued around 1652 or 53 and then only a fraction of that. Throughout these exhortations Mitsumasa censured the retainers with a force equivalent to abusing someone to his face. We know that at that time Mitsumasa was in an extremely tense situation vis-a-vis his retainers, and thus in order to create this immortal saying found in accounts of him as an enlightened ruler this one section has been cut adrift from its context and made to stand alone. In other words this immortal saying has been squeezed out from the entirety of his efforts to overcome the dissension and antagonism between him and his retainers, and it is the result of a transformation in that relationship.⁶

Concerning his relationship with the people of the domain, accounts of Mitsumasa as an enlightened ruler picture him as a lord to be appreciated above all others. He is depicted as a daimyo who rewarded good deeds done by the people, who put relief (*o-sukui*) into practice and to whom gratitude was paid for the blessings his long life bestowed on the domain. The actual relationship between Mitsumasa as a domain lord and the people of the domain, however, was one filled with tension, and when the bakufu's traveling inspectors made their rounds of the domain, they received vehement petitions from the peasants regarding his regulation of religion and his plundering of their resources. In his actual administration Mitsumasa aimed at putting relief into practice, but based on the concept of "the rice fields of the realm" (*tenka no denchi*), he believed that to put relief into practice for just anyone and everyone would end up being unfair, so he gradually reached the point of putting relief into practice on a selective basis. Thus even though he put up a remonstrance box (*isamebako*) and used it to absorb dissatisfaction, he forcibly strengthened his control over the people of his domain through his political policies.⁷ Just as Mitsumasa tried to overcome the dissension between himself and his retainers by intensifying the concept of loyalty, however, it is clear that he tried to overcome the tension between himself and the people of the domain through intensifying the concept of "relief." Both of these concepts hold an important place in the ruling class thought of early modern Japan.

Turning to Mitsumasa's relationship with the bakufu, we see that in accounts of him as an enlightened ruler, many anecdotes come to the surface to show the confidence in which he was held by the shogun and the elders (*tairō*) as well as his intimacy with those in authority, but the real Mitsumasa was a daimyo regarded with suspicion by bakufu bureaucrats. He was entirely too fond of scholarship concerning politics, and because he enforced a policy of having people prove they were not Christians not by being registered as Buddhists but by being registered at

⁶Fukaya Katsumi, "Meikun sōzō to hanpei kokka" (2) *Bungaku kenkyū ka kiyō* no. 41 (Waseda Daigaku Daigakuin, Tetsugaku, shigaku 1995) 1996.

⁷Fukaya Katsumi, "Meikun sōzō to hanpei kokka" () *Bungaku kenkyū ka kiyō* no. 40 (Waseda Daigaku Daigakuin, Tetsugaku, shigaku 1994) 1995.

Shinto shrines, in terms of the bakufu line he was suspected of treason, even to the extent of having his son and heir Tsunamasa summoned for questioning. There was even tension between Mitsumasa and the bakufu regarding the way Christianity was to be rooted out within the domain. On the other hand, however, he received special consideration from shogun Iemitsu allowing him to set up a subsidiary to Tōshōgu in Okayama in which to worship the apotheized Tokugawa Ieyasu, and when there were floods and other natural disasters in his domain, he was able to play on his closeness to the shogunal household to the greatest possible extent in acquiring financial assistance, and it is also true that he tried to make the most of sidling up to the bakufu in reigning over his own domain. Along these lines he took up and polished the phrase “direct administrative intervention” (*jiki no shioki*) by the lord and made this into his own personal obligation.⁸

The Image of the Enlightened Ruler and Consciousness of the State

What kind of state consciousness did this kind of image of an enlightened ruler manifest within the context of the bakuhan state system?

The words defined above as Mitsumasa’s immortal saying demonstrate that the shogun’s authority prevailed overwhelmingly over that of the daimyo. They also demonstrate, however that the shogun himself was in a relative position in that he had been delegated by heaven, the daimyo were not simply officials dispatched by the shogun but used freely their own retainers who served only them and them alone, and the daimyo were themselves political subjects who had the responsibility for the welfare of the people in the domain that they had received in trust from the shogun. One explanation for the bakuhan state system that takes the position of emphasizing the daimyo’s “right to their own administrative intervention” (*jibun shioki ken*) has it that the shogun and the daimyo each possessed part of authority. This perspective that defines domain authority as a small state by asserting the partibility of authority has been around for a long time. As I indicated in the introduction however, no matter where the debate goes concerning centralized versus partible authority, insofar as it takes as its chief object the issue of the ratio at which the same level of authority was divided and held, it simply ends up being an argument over relativity that does no more than reiterate the relative importance of the authority of each.

In the consciousness of the state suggested in the image of the enlightened ruler, the authority of the shogun and daimyo differ precisely in terms of level. Just as both appear in terms of the relationship between lord and retainer, their separate authorities exist in a hierarchical relationship based on status. Even the high position given the accounts of enlightened rulers among the daimyo by the shogun, the bakufu bureaucrats, and the roving inspectors in itself reflects that fact. What is important, however, is that this kind of daimyo was not a provincial governor (*kokushi*) but acted consistently throughout as the lord of a state (*kokushu*). I think this is an expression of the world of the domain that within the state generalized by the bakufu did not ever try to abandon the aim of seeing itself as a state authority with its own independent existence in terms of state consciousness. This can be understood historically in the following way.

⁸Fukaya Katsumi, “Hōkoku yōshi: meikun sōzō to hanpei kokka” *Okayama han kenkyū* no. 11. (September 1994) Okayama Han Kenkyū Kai.

Out of the strife generated in the warring states period, the establishment of the bakuhan system was the result of the regional small public authorities (*kōgi*) that had appeared as a manifestation of the authority of a number of sengoku daimyo being taken away to be concentrated and absorbed into one public authority through the overwhelming strength of a central unified political power. The daimyo were nevertheless not transformed into high level bureaucrats, rather as hereditary possessors of dominions they maintained their positions as feudal lords and while taking their place in the master-servant relationship as proxies for public authority, in the broadest sense they ended up being positioned as constituents of the public polity. It can thus be said that the domain lords of bakufu and han in their totality constituted public authority. To put it another way, this unified public authority forced the daimyo to serve as retainers in terms of the status system and it had the power to force the way they controlled their domains to conform fundamentally to the center's "public administrative intervention" (*kōgi shioki*) but in the end it was not able to take away the state-like characteristics of the daimyo domains. For this reason it never tried to stop the daimyo domains from being small states.

These small states, however, were not small portions of a level playing field that constituted the entire state in the bakuhan system; instead they tried to maintain themselves at the subordinate level where they stood in the status system. In this sense, if we take bakufu authority which was central unified political authority as the superordinate state and the daimyo's controlling authority and the areas they each controlled as being in the position of subordinate states, then the top and bottom combination of all of the many subordinate states plus the bakufu's authority as the single superordinate state constituted the state in the bakuhan system. Thus in the sense that in terms of status they exhibited subordination while they also exhibited state-like independence, I would like to call these units the domain-bounded state (*hanpei kokka*). The ultimate loss of state-like characteristics by these low ranking states and their descent into local self-government came with the Meiji state. Let me say as an aside that while I can not at this point enter into the relationship between the imperial court and domain lord Mitsumasa or the image of Mitsumasa as an enlightened ruler, I see the emperor and the court as constituting not the substance of authority in the bakuhan state but rather as constituting the substance of a golden crown of prestige that had substance in and of itself.⁹ All of these various substances went into the composition of the state in the bakuhan system in its broadest meaning. This is what constituted the early modern state in Japan. Concerning the possibility of the domains becoming states, there is the position that sees a strengthening in the independence of domains through political reforms in the last half of the early modern period, leading to the appearance of the domain state. In my opinion, this kind of tendency can be perceived in monopsonist policies and market policies, but at the same time a strengthening in the bakufu's leadership can be seen in things like measures to counter peasant uprisings and financial policies. This position too cannot be divorced from arguments over relative importance in the partibility of authority.

⁹In reference to this point, please see Fukaya Katsumi, *Kinsei no kokka: shakai to tennō* (Azekura Shobō,

Conclusion

I would like to summarize my position as follows. Through tension and dissension with the people of the domain, retainers, and the bakufu, daimyo administration, that is to say, concepts and methods with more universality for the early modern polity came to put in an appearance. These erased and caused the transformation of tensions, dissension and antagonisms obtained in the actual process and caused the emergence of the portrayal of the enlightened ruler, an image that enormously amplified the inherent temperament and ability of intelligent daimyo.

Once the enlightened ruler had been created, his posthumous instructions and deeds came to offer an idealized form for what would be a desirable daimyo, a desirable retainer, and a desirable peasant as well as the relationships that ought to exist between them and thus came to stipulate the attitude of those who came after him. At the same time, if you look at the image of the enlightened ruler as a representation of state consciousness, the formation of the image of the lord as something that could be called an enlightened ruler makes an assertion that the daimyo's dominion had self-governing capabilities as a single-unit state at the same time that it also manifested satisfaction and compliance with the fact of dependency as a subordinate state vis-a-vis public authority, the superordinate state, what might be called delegated rule (*yoji*). The image of the enlightened ruler manifested both of these dimensions in its idealized personality, and I interpret it as the sovereign symbol of the domain bounded state shining like a star overhead in the world of the domain that contained daimyo, retainers, and peasants.

Chart I

Chronology of Ikeda Mitsumasa's life

- 4/4 Born in Okayama castle
Meets Ieyasu at Fushimi
- 6/14 Succeeds to Himeji domain in Harima (420,000 koku)
- 3/6 Ordered transferred to Tottori domain in Inaba and Hōki (320,000 koku)
- 7/ Receiving one character from shogun Iemitsu's name, he changes his name from Sachitaka (?) to Mitsumasa
- 8/ Accompanies shogun Iemitsu on his procession to Kyoto and is appointed to the position of vice-major general in the left imperial guards
- 6/18 Ordered transferred to Okayama domain in Bizen (315,000 koku)
- 1645 3/2 Given permission to set up a branch of Tōshōgu by shogun Iemitsu
- 1647 5/17 Second daughter Teruko is adopted by Iemitsu and married to the Ichijo family
- 1652 9/18 Bakufu senior councillors warn Mitsumasa's son Tsunamasa regarding rumors of his father's treachery
- 7/ A great flood, Mitsumasa returns to his domain to plan for rebuilding and reforms the system of local fiefs
- 5/ Reducing the number of temples, Mitsumasa uses a system of Shinto registration against Christians
- 1/ Over 100 schools are established in the domain
Shizutani school is established as the domain school
- 5/22 Mitsumasa dies in the western enceinte of Okayama castle

Chart II

Accounts of Ikeda Mitsumasa as an Enlightened Ruler

1	<i>Nagatada jihitsu oboegaku</i>	Tsuda Nagatada	1654-63
2	<i>Rekkō mongo</i>	Ikeda Masatomo	1689
	<i>Hōretsu shidōki</i>	Ichiuura Seishichirō	1704
	<i>Yūhiroku</i>	Mimura XXX	1748 or 49
	<i>Bihan shūgiroku</i>	Kondō Atsushi	
6	<i>Kunsoku</i>	Kondō Atsushi	
7	<i>Amayo no akari</i>	Yuasa Jōzan	
	<i>Sosshōroku</i>	Kondō Seigai	
	<i>Kibi onko hitsuroku</i> vol 101: <i>Yūhiroku</i>	Ōzawa Ichidayū	1790s
10	<i>Ikeda-ke rireki ryakki</i>	Saitō Seijiemon Kazuyo	
11	<i>Kibi rekkō iji</i>	Yūasa Shinbei Mototada	1797
12	<i>Gyōshiroku</i>	Hayakawa Joemon	
13	<i>Gyōshiroku furoku</i>	Hayakawa Joemon	

In addition are many other texts including *Ibōroku*, *Yushō gen*, *Onko zakki*, *Eika yōhen*, *Sekiji shasō*, *Bizen shōshō gokajun*, *Bizen kokusei kikigaki* etc. (*Ikeda Mitsumasa kōden*).